



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Pardon of Prisoners in Azerbaijan

As delivered by Deputy Representative Douglas Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 22, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States took note of the statement issued on January 8 by the EU Presidency, which was also distributed to all delegations on January 19, welcoming the December 29 pardon and release of 160 prisoners in Azerbaijan. We join the European Union in welcoming these pardons, which constitute a very positive step forward.

We also note that yesterday, the Interior Ministry of Azerbaijan announced the release of ten persons detained during and after the October 15 presidential election. The ministry also announced that the cases of 40 others are proceeding and investigations of 50 others are going forward as well. This is very welcome news. Nonetheless, more than 100 individuals detained in relation to the disorder following the elections still remain in jail.

The United States urges the government of Azerbaijan to expedite the investigations of those remaining detainees. We call on the authorities to charge those arrested with crimes and to present the evidence against them, or to release them.

We also call on the authorities to proceed in accordance with international standards, and to provide all legal protections and due process to all detainees.

Thank you.